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TAGS: [SOCI](#) [NIH](#) [ML](#)
SUBJECT: DEPUTY NIAID DIRECTOR MEETS WITH PRESIDENT AMADOU
TOUQNI TOURE

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Peter Henry Barlerin, for reasons 1.4
(b) (d).

¶1. (C) On January 13, Charge and the Deputy Director of the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), Dr. Hugh Auchincloss, met with Malian President Amadou Toumani Toure (ATT). ATT was accompanied by the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Mrs. Siby Ginette Bellegarde, and by the Rector of the University of Bamako, Professor Amadou DIALLO. The U.S. delegation included Ms. Elaine LaMontagne, the widow of former NIAID Deputy Director John LaMontagne, who died in 2004 shortly after a visit to Mali, NIAID Director of Intramural Research Dr. Kathryn Zoon, NIH Resident Scientist in Mali Dr. Richard Sakai, NIAID's Dr. Robert Gwadz, and Dr. Ydrissa Sow, NIH Coordinator in Mali.

TWENTY YEARS OF FRUITFUL COLLABORATION

¶2. (C) ATT said he wished Mrs. LaMontagne a warm welcome. "I knew your husband," he said, "he was a remarkable person." ATT noted that he had been very impressed by the research on malaria and other infectious diseases carried out between NIAID and the University of Bamako at Point G. Dr. Auchincloss said the large delegation had come to celebrate not only the 20th anniversary of collaboration with the University of Bamako but also to be among the first to mark the 50th anniversary of the year of the Republic of Mali's independence.

¶3. (C) He said that following on the work of his predecessor, he is trying to keep the partnership one of equals. Priority illnesses are identified by Malian scientists, and it is Malian scientists who design the experiment protocols. In the past two decades, NIAID has paid for scores of promising young Malian scientists to study at universities in the United States, Europe, and Canada, where they obtain master's degrees, doctorates, and medical degrees. It is a remarkable fact, Dr. Auchincloss stated, that almost every one of these Malians has returned home to Mali after their studies.

¶4. (C) Auchincloss said NIAID and the University of Bamako's collaboration at the Malaria Research and Training Center (MRTC) has focused on vaccine development and mosquito vector research. In 2002, based on the experience with the MRTC, the University formed an NIAID-sponsored International Center for Excellence in Research (ICER), one of only three of its kind in the world. The goal of the ICER is to create locally-managed, sustainable research and training programs. Dr. Auchincloss called the Mali ICER a jewel for NIAID. In 2006, NIAID also set up with the University of Bamako the center for Research and Training on HIV and Tuberculosis (SEREFO).

INAUGURATION OF VACCINE RESEARCH SITE

15. (C) In addition to marking the two important anniversaries, Auchincloss noted, the NIAID team had come to baptize the clinical field research site in the village of Bancoumana. The Bancoumana site, where a malaria vaccine trial is being conducted, has been named for Dr. John LaMontagne. ATT said he had watched the inauguration of the Bancoumana site on national television the night before, had heard from the Minister of Higher Education that a baby had been born at the center's clinic while the ceremony was taking place, and understood that the baby was named for John LaMontagne. He noted that there were already two people in the room who had received the Malian Legion of Honor medal -- Dr. Sakai and Dr. Gwadz -- and that in recognition of Dr. LaMontagne's contribution to the Malian people, he intended to decorate him posthumously, via Mrs. LaMontagne. "We don't have a lot of means," he said, "but it is the least we can do." Mrs. LaMontagne said she was deeply touched, and thanked the President for his gesture.

MEETING WITH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT

16. (C) Earlier in the day, Charge, Dr. Auchincloss and the rest of the delegation paid a courtesy call on the President of the National Assembly, Dioncounda Traore. Traore, a mathematician by training, said that a lot of development partners stay in their offices in the West, formulating recommendations as to what Malians should do, "without ever getting to know us or our problems." He said the hands-on approach was what differentiated NIAID from many others.

17. (C) Traore said he would try to do a better job of letting the people of Mali know what NIAID and its team of scientists are doing. He noted that he could not begin to

express the same natural enthusiasm that the children of Bancoumana showed at the previous day's ceremony, but said "Our responsibility as elected officials is to make this success known to the rest of the people of Mali." Dr. Auchincloss invited Dr. Traore to consider a visit to the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, MD, and in the interim, to visit the NIH/University of Bamako site at Point

18.
BARLERIN